Order No. 227 by the People's Commissar of Defence of the USSR

The Order of the National Commissar for the Defense of the Soviet Union.

July 28 1942, Moscow.

The enemy throws new forces to the front without regard to heavy losses and penetrates deep into the Soviet Union, seizing new regions, destroying our cities and villages, and violating, plundering and killing the Soviet population. Combat goes on in region Voronej, near Don, in the south, and at the gates of the Northern Caucasus. The German invaders penetrate toward Stalingrad, to Volga and want at any cost to trap Kuban and the Northern Caucasus, with their oil and grain. The enemy already has captured Vorochilovgrad, Starobelsk, Rossosh, Kupyansk, Valuyki, Novochercassk, Rostov on Don, half Voronej. Part of the troops of the Southern front, following the panic-mongers, have left Rostov and Novochercassk without severe resistance and without orders from Moscow, covering their banners with shame.

The population of our country, who love and respect the Red Army, start to be discouraged in her, and lose faith in the Red Army, and many curse the Red Army for leaving our people under the yoke of the German oppressors, and itself running east.

Some stupid people at the front calm themselves with talk that we can retreat further to the east, as we have a lot of territory, a lot of ground, a lot of population and that there will always be much bread for us.

They want to justify the infamous behavior at the front. But such talk is falsehood, helpful only to our enemies.

Each commander, Red Army soldier and political commissar should understand that our means are not limitless. The territory of the Soviet state is not a desert, but people - workers, peasants, intelligentsia, our fathers, mothers, wives, brothers, children. The territory of the USSR which the enemy has captured and aims to capture is bread and other products for the army, metal and fuel for industry, factories, plants supplying the army with arms and ammunition, railroads. After the loss of Ukraine, Belarus, Baltic republics, Donetzk, and other areas we have much less territory, much less people, bread, metal, plants and factories. We have lost more than 70 million people, more than 800 million pounds of bread annually and more than 10 million tons of metal annually. Now we do not have predominance over the Germans in human reserves, in reserves of bread. To retreat further - means to waste ourselves and to waste at the same time our Motherland.

Therefore it is necessary to eliminate talk that we have the capability endlessly to retreat, that we have a lot of territory, that our country is great and rich, that there is a large population, and that bread always will be abundant. Such talk is false and parasitic, it weakens us and benefits the enemy, if we do not stop retreating we will be without bread, without fuel, without metal, without raw material, without factories and plants, without railroads.

This leads to the conclusion, it is time to finish retreating.

Not one step back! Such should now be our main slogan.

It is necessary to defend each position, each meter of our territory, up to the last drop of blood, to cling for each plot of Soviet land and to defend it as long as possible.

Our Motherland is experiencing hard days. We must stop, and then to throw back and smash the enemy regardless of cost. The Germans are not so strong, as it seems to the panic-mongers. They strain their last forces. To withstand their impact now, means to ensure our victory in some months.

Can we withstand the impact, and then throw back the enemy to the west? Yes we can, because our factories and plants in the rear are fine and our army receives ever more and more airplanes, tanks, artillery and mortars.

What do we lack?

There is no order and discipline in companies, battalions, regiments, in tank units and air squadrons. This is our main deficiency. We should establish in our army the most stringent order and solid discipline, if we want to salvage the situation, and to keep our Motherland.

It is impossible to tolerate commanders and commissars permitting units to leave their positions. It is impossible to tolerate commanders and commissars who admit that some panic-mongers determined the situation on the field of combat and carried away in departure other soldiers and opened the front to the enemy.

The panic-mongers and cowards should be exterminated in place.

Henceforth the solid law of discipline for each commander, Red Army soldier, and commissar should be the requirement - not a single step back without order from higher command. Company, battalion, regiment and division - commanders and appropriate commissars, who retreat without orders from higher commanders, are betrayers of the Motherland.

These are the orders of our Motherland.

To execute this order - means to defend our lands, to save the Motherland, to exterminate and to conquer the hated enemy.

After the winter retreat under pressure of the Red Army, when in German troops discipline became loose, the Germans for recovery of discipline imposed severe measures which resulted in quite good outcomes. They formed 100 penal companies from soldiers who were guilty of breaches of discipline because of cowardice or bewilderment, put them at dangerous sections of the front and commanded them to redeem their sins by blood. They have also formed approximately ten penal battalions from commanders guilty of breaches of discipline through cowardice or bewilderment, deprived them of their decorations, transferred them to even more dangerous sections of the front and commanded them to redeem their sins. Finally, they have formed special squads and put them behind unstable divisions and ordered them to shoot panic-mongers in case of unauthorized retreats or attempted surrender. As we know, these measures were effective, and now German troops fight better than they fought in the winter. And here is the situation, that the German troops have good discipline, though they do not have the high purpose of protection of the Motherland, and have only one extortionate purpose - to subdue another's country, and our troops have the higher purpose of protecting the abused Motherland,and do not have such discipline and so suffer defeat. Is it necessary for us to learn from our enemies, as our grandparents studied their enemies in the past and achieved victory?

I think it is necessary.

The Supreme General Headquarters of the Red Army commands:

1. Military councils of the fronts and first of all front commanders should:

a) Unconditionally eliminate retreat moods in the troops and with a firm hand bar propaganda that we can and should retreat further east, and that such retreat will cause no harm;

b) Unconditionally remove from their posts and send to the High Command for court martial those army commanders who have allowed unauthorized troop withdrawals from occupied positions, without the order of the Front command.

c) Form within each Front from one up to three (depending on the situation) penal battalions (800 persons) where commanders and high commanders and appropriate commissars of all service arms who have been guilty of a breach of discipline due to cowardice or bewilderment will be sent, and put them on more difficult sectors of the front to give them an opportunity to redeem by blood their crimes against the Motherland.

2. Military councils of armies and first of all army commanders should;

a) Unconditionally remove from their offices corps and army commanders and commissars who have accepted troop withdrawals from occupied positions without the order of the army command, and route them to the military councils of the fronts for court martial;

b) Form within the limits of each army 3 to 5 well-armed defensive squads (up to 200 persons in each), and put them directly behind unstable divisions and require them in case of panic and scattered withdrawals of elements of the divisions to shoot in place panic-mongers and cowards and thus help the honest soldiers of the division execute their duty to the Motherland;

c) Form within the limits of each army up to ten (depending on the situation) penal companies (from 150 to 200 persons in each) where ordinary soldiers and low ranking commanders who have been guilty of a breach of dicipline due to cowardice or bewilderment will be routed, and put them at difficult sectors of the army to give them an opportunity to redeem by blood their crimes against the Motherland.

3. Commanders and commissars of corps and divisions should;

a) Unconditionally remove from their posts commanders and commissars of regiments and battalions who have accepted unwarranted withdrawal of their troops without the order of the corps or division commander, take from them their orders and medals and route them to military councils of fronts for court martial;

b) Render all help and support to the defensive squads of the army in their business of strengthening order and discipline in the units.

This order is to be read in all companies, cavalry squadrons, batteries, squadrons, commands and headquarters.

The national commissar for defense: J. Stalin.

Article Sources and Contributors

Order No. 227 by the People's Commissar of Defence of the USSR *Source*: http://en.wikisource.org/w/index.php?oldid=2977000 *Contributors*: ChVA, Innotata, John Vandenberg, Kathleen.wright5, Mattwilkins, Vmalakhov, 4 anonymous edits

License

Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported
//creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/